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SUBJECT: SERBIAN PRESIDENT TADIC LOOKS TO OSCE TO HELP
ENSURE FREE AND FAIR REFERENDUM IN MONTENEGRO

Classified By: Classified by Political Counselor Bruce Connuck for Reas
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a March 10 meeting in Vienna with USOSCE Ambassador Finley, Serbian President Boris Tadic expressed hope that the OSCE and ODIHR will play a prominent role in monitoring the May 21 independence referendum in Montenegro. Tadic said that a majority of Serbs favor cooperating with ICTY and predicted that Serbia will deliver Ratko Mladic within thirty days to The Hague. Tadic warned that independence for Kosovo could result in the emergence of a Radical government in Belgrade, and derail stability and democracy in the western Balkans and Serbia's path to Euro-Atlantic integration.

Serbia Will Deliver Mladic by April 10

¶2. (C) Tadic used the occasion of a March 9-10 bilateral visit to Austria to request a meeting with Ambassador Finley, who he had met previously and most recently in Washington shortly following his inauguration as president in July 2004. Tadic began the meeting by predicting that Serbia will deliver ICTY-indicted war criminal Ratko Mladic to The Hague within thirty days. While he could not say with certainty if Mladic is hiding in Serbia or outside its borders, Tadic is encouraging collaboration between the armed forces and the police to apprehend him. In any case, Tadic said, Mladic's apprehension is now merely a "technical problem," as sixty percent of the Serbian public currently favors cooperation with ICTY. He added that seventy percent favor EU membership, sixty percent support membership in NATO's Partnership-for-Peace, while forty percent even favor outright membership in NATO. These figures in support of Euro-Atlantic integration are remarkable, Tadic argued, given the fact that NATO bombs were falling on Serbia only six years ago.

ODIHR Needed to Keep Montenegro Government Honest

¶3. (C) Switching to Montenegro, Tadic appealed for the OSCE and its Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to play a significant role in ensuring that Montenegro's independence referendum is conducted in a free and fair fashion. ODIHR monitors need to deploy at once, Tadic continued, to monitor the run-up to the actual vote on May 21. Tadic's Senior Advisor, Vuk Jeremic, reported rumors that the Montenegrin government is buying voter identification cards from opposition supporters at the rate of 500 euro per voter, to keep opposition voter turnout low. ODIHR should not be hesitant to speak out on this and

any other abuses it might uncover. In the event of a close vote, Tadic stressed that there should be no "rounding up" of numbers to meet the 55 percent super-majority threshold necessary for the referendum to pass.

¶4. (SBU) Ambassador Finley assured Tadic that the OSCE and ODIHR have already set the ball in motion to send a robust observation mission to monitor the referendum. USOSCE poloff added that ODIHR expects to deploy twenty long-term observers by the end of March, and at least 200 short-term observers to monitor the actual referendum on May 21.

Independence for Kosovo Threatens Balkan Stability

¶5. (C) Turning to Kosovo, Tadic urged the U.S. and its Contact Group partners to look at the issue of its future status from the "larger perspective." Independence for Kosovo, Tadic argued, can only have serious negative consequences for Serbia as well as Kosovo's minority Serbian population, which is "fighting for survival." Independence for Kosovo, Tadic implied, would bring with it a day of reckoning, in which Serbian voters would turn their backs on the country's more moderate parties in favor of the Radicals, who were not interested in continuing down the path towards European integration. Tadic even implied that he might share the fate of President Djindjic (whom he referred to as "my older brother,") who was assassinated in ¶2003. Senior Advisor Jeremic appealed for U.S. political support, claiming that the EU is suffering from "enlargement fatigue, and cannot offer us anything." Ambassador Finley ended the meeting by advising Tadic to engage constructively in the future status talks and assuring him that the United States will continue to

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support moderate voices such as his.

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